

As Jefferson County School System Evolves, Board of Ed Adapts
Staff Contributor July 17, 2017 Education

The Jefferson County Board of Education (BOE) signed a contract at the BOE meeting on Monday, June 12, to buy 150+ acres of land to accommodate future student growth in the county.

Jefferson County Schools is growing by an average of 71 students per year, with growth distributed unevenly throughout the county. The redistricting plan developed this year was the short-term step to address overcrowding of Jefferson County's schools, while the purchase of land and eventual building of additional schools will address long-term needs. Based on the data analysis conducted, at current rates, the land purchase will accommodate the next 35 years of student growth in Jefferson County.

The BOE has been strategically planning this move for several years. First, the Board began setting aside protected funding that could only be used for land and building purchase for growth. After many years, the Board accrued enough funding to be able to complete the purchase of the land without going to the tax payers for a bond.

"We want to use tax dollars carefully and consciously, treating your money as if it were our own," said Superintendent of Jefferson County Schools, Bondy Shay Gibson. "This is why we've been sure to do our due diligence in saving carefully over time and researching all of our options to find the one that is the absolute best deal for Jefferson taxpayers."

Second, the Board was careful in researching the best property to meet the growing needs of the system. The strategic location of this property was determined based on research related to the specific growth areas in the county. The Thrasher architecture firm donated their time free of charge to perform a comparative analysis of all available land. After narrowing the potential school sites to the top location, the district completed extensive soil sampling that ensured the piece of land could easily accommodate construction of three full schools (elementary, middle, and high) at the lowest possible cost with no surprises.

Throughout the entire research and purchase process, the Board has worked closely with the West Virginia School Building Authority to ensure that this site meets their criteria and will be eligible for funding when school building becomes necessary.

"This is an exciting time for Jefferson County Schools. Our population growth is a challenge that I'll gladly take to seek solutions to make our school system one of the strongest in West Virginia," said Scott Sudduth, BOE president.

The land acquisition is part of a Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan (C.E.F.P) that the state of West Virginia requires each school to revise and update every ten years. The next 10-year cycle will begin planning in 2018. Jefferson County Schools will gather feedback from the community, as well as work with an outside consultant to create this revised plan. The consultant's services will be funded by the West Virginia Building Authority.



To learn more about this project, click [here](#).

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With a total of 17 schools, JCPS employs more than 1,100 staff members and enrolls more than 9,000 students. Since 2000, Jefferson County has been one of the fastest growing localities in West Virginia, experiencing more than 30 percent growth in its population.

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